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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Developments in Sino-Soviet Relations

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Central Intelligence Agency
Directorate of Intelligence
23 April 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Developments in Sino-Soviet Relations

Relations between the USSR and China over the past several weeks have been marked by public acrimony and intense competition for influence with key third countries.

Each side has openly pressed its case on the frontier dispute, but both insist there have been no recent serious border incidents. The talks this year on border-river navigation ended early last month without agreement. Bilateral trade seems to be leveling off, after increasing since the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The Soviets have been unable to conceal their discomfiture at signs of continued improvement in Sino-US ties, and the Chinese have reacted in much the same way to the prospect of increased Soviet-Japanese economic cooperation. Sino-Soviet rivalry in Europe continues, with the Chinese doing their best to obstruct Moscow's detente policy.

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Note: This memorandum is one in a series of reports on Sino-Soviet relations. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence, with contributions from the Office of Strategic Research and the Office of Economic Research.

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The rancor in Sino-Soviet relations has been displayed in the unusually outspoken remarks of Soviet officials over recent weeks. Politburo candidate member Ustinov, for example, branded Peking's policies "strange and monstrous," during a major speech on 20 April. Earlier this month at a press conference in Stockholm, Soviet Premier Kosygin took a gratuitous swipe at "the Chinese leaders' clamour" about a Soviet threat to China. Kosygin branded the allegation "an out-and-out lie." He blamed the Chinese for creating tension, saying that Peking's anti-Sovietism is a product of its own internal difficulties. Kosygin reiterated Moscow's pledge to keep on trying to improve state relations through negotiation, and professed a belief that China would "sooner or later" return to a policy of peaceful cooperation with the USSR.

By all the signs, substantial improvement in Sino-Soviet ties will come only "later"--if at all. Meanwhile, both sides are clearly molding their policies on the assumption that the hostility will be protracted.

A few days before Kosygin spoke, Mikhail Kapitsa, head of the China division of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, gave US Embassy officers a status report on Sino-Soviet negotiations. He acknowledged that Deputy Foreign Minister Ilichev, chief Soviet delegate at the border talks, and Soviet Ambassador Tolstikov were "not very busy" in Peking. According to Kapitsa, China goes on insisting that "unacceptable demands" be met before the process of defining the border begins. Presumably, one of the Chinese requirements is the familiar one for a Soviet military pullback from the frontier. The Chinese, he said, accuse the Soviets of trying to force negotiations "with an atom bomb hanging over the table." Kapitsa recited the usual list of overtures by Moscow (proposals on non-aggression and non-use of force, etc.) ostensibly aimed at relieving Chinese concerns. Claiming that Peking had spurned all these initiatives, he concluded that the Chinese want negotiations, not agreements.

One-sided though it is, Kapitsa's version seems to reflect fairly well the sterility of Sino-Soviet discussions. He complained about the tight restrictions on Soviet activities in China, but made a special effort not to leave his interlocutors with a totally negative impression. Stretching hard, Kapitsa said the Soviet Embassy was able to deal "amicably" with the Chinese on housekeeping problems. He stressed that the border has been quiet; although occasional violations by herdsmen have occurred, there has been no shooting. This last squares with information from other sources. Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Chiao Kuan-hua, for example, told [redacted] that there had been no recent frontier clashes. Verbal clashes are another matter.

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Peking Denounces Soviet Name-changers

Moscow's decree last December announcing that Russian names had been substituted for Chinese-sounding ones in nine localities in the Soviet Far East drew a sharp blast from Peking last month. A sarcastic article in NCNA charged that Moscow's action was an effort to whitewash "Tsarist Russia's crimes of aggression against China" and to promulgate the "big lie" that the area had never been under Chinese control. Such "tampering with history," the article asserted, was standard behavior for the "Soviet revisionists." The NCNA article is full of detail that the Chinese claim supports their position and seems to be somewhat beyond other statements in implying a latent Chinese claim to huge chunks of Soviet territory. In a second decree, the USSR has given Russianized names to some 250 rivers, mountains, and bays in Siberia and the Far East. Chinese propagandists will have a field day with this new material, if and when they choose to use it.

The frontier dispute has been getting a rather thorough airing in Soviet tracts. Last month, a decade after Peking first made a public issue of "unequal treaties" between Tsarist Russia and China,

the Soviet academic journal, Problems of the Far East, carried an article castigating China for "cartographic aggression" in laying claim to 1.5 million square kilometers of Soviet territory. In discussing the border fighting of 1969, the article stressed that all the armed incidents at that time took place along sections of the frontier shown on Chinese maps as "undefined" or as "lost" Chinese territory. More recently, the Soviet journal International Affairs condemned China's territorial pretensions as a "monstrous conglomeration of tendentious absurdities." Peking's "foolhardy" allegations with respect to "unequal treaties" are without basis in fact, Moscow has been arguing with growing persistence.

Navigation Talks Run Aground

Given the charged atmosphere, Peking's terse announcement on 8 March that the annual meeting of the Sino-Soviet Commission on border-river navigation ended without agreement came as no surprise. The talks had begun on 5 January in the Chinese border town of Hei-ho. NCNA indicated that each side made a report on navigation matters, but apparently the only thing the two could agree on was to hold the next meeting in the USSR at a date to be determined later.

These talks normally deal with such technicalities as dredging border rivers and maintaining navigation markers, but attempts to resolve even such workaday problems have foundered on the conflicting territorial claims of the two sides. The exchange of public broadsides on the frontier issue while the talks were in progress was hardly designed to help the discussions.

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This is the third consecutive year the navigation talks have failed.

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The Triangle

The Soviet leaders probably see the communiqué following Dr. Kissinger's February visit to Peking as unwelcome confirmation of some of their worst fears. Close Sino-US relations remain close to the top of their list of worries about the international scene.

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The Soviet reaction to Sino-US moves toward rapprochement over the past two years suggests that Moscow resents Peking's role more than Washington's. The Kremlin leaders decided early on that the Chinese are more malicious and pose a greater political threat to Soviet interests. Moscow apparently has

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been persuaded by what it sees to be the logic of developments since early 1971 that Peking is more to be blamed than Washington for any attempts to put pressure on the USSR by improving Sino-US ties. This was reflected recently in a Pravda article on 15 April, which scored Peking for sowing discord in Europe and Asia and at the same time warmly endorsed increased cooperation between the US and USSR.

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The Kremlin presumably found the announcement that the US and China will establish "liaison offices" in their respective capitals particularly disturbing inasmuch as the arrangement required a major concession on China's part. Peking had never before agreed to such an arrangement with a country that maintains full diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The Soviets will be quick to interpret China's flexibility as convincing proof that Peking will not allow principles to deter it from conciliating the US. Inveterately suspicious, Moscow's leaders are undoubtedly wondering what additional understandings may have been reached and not revealed.

The Soviets probably find other aspects of what the communiqué calls the "accelerating normalization" of Sino-US relations (broadened trade and cultural relations, for example) disquieting if less surprising than the agreement to exchange liaison offices. They apparently see little point, however, in publicizing their anxiety. Soviet media have been extremely circumspect in commenting on the Sino-US communiqué, and Soviet propagandists apparently have been instructed to play down Moscow's concern over the ramifications of better relations between Peking and Washington.

Moscow Sensitive to Bruce Appointment

A Literaturnaya Gazeta article on 28 March discussed David Bruce and the implications of his appointment as head of the US liaison office in Peking. The author, Yuriy Yartsev, slanted his

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selection of biographic data on Bruce to attempt to show that the Chinese will be dealing with an archtypal capitalist and cold warrior. Yartsev portrayed Bruce as having distinguished himself in promoting the interests of American capital and in crusading against the USSR (while posted in Europe), China (as an assistant to Dean Acheson in the early 50s), and the Vietnamese Communists (by "sabotaging" the Paris talks.)

After making the point that Bruce's previous activities should not endear him to the Chinese, the article commented that Peking will nonetheless welcome someone with such impressive anti-Soviet credentials. Yartsev gave prominence to reports in the Western press that "people of this type will be liked in China." He voiced the suspicion that Bruce had a hand in cultivating "backstage contacts" with Peking in Paris during 1970-71 at the same time that he was helping to "sabotage" talks with the Vietnamese Communists.

The article acknowledged that dealings with China rank high on Washington's list of priorities and stressed that Bruce's diplomatic assignments have involved the highest interests of US policy. "He has always been appointed to strategically important regions and to places where American capital can be profitably invested." Yartsev cited the Washington Post's opinion that Bruce's presence will make the liaison group--an "embassy in all but name"--one of the major US missions abroad.

The Soviets are bothered by the appointment of so prestigious a figure to head the US office in Peking. One reason is suggested by a remark from a public lecturer in Leningrad in early April. The lecturer pointed out that there is currently no US ambassador in Moscow. In this, the Soviets seem bothered most by considerations of appearance and prestige; they do not want the impression to get about that the US is giving a higher priority to ties with China than to ties with the Soviet Union.

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Moscow, Peking, and Tokyo

One of the USSR's major disappointments during the past year was its inability to make much headway vis-a-vis China in Japan. This has been particularly painful in light of the strides Peking has made in improving ties with Tokyo. Over the past few weeks, however, there has been some improvement of Soviet-Japanese relations. The Japanese broke the ice by making it clear they would not link the question of Japanese participation in joint economic ventures in Siberia with political problems.

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Tokyo's more forthcoming attitude on economic cooperation shows that it wants better balance in its relations with China and the USSR. Moscow's response has been enthusiastic, even though Japanese officials continue to insist in private that significantly better political relations must await satisfaction of Tokyo's claims to a few Soviet-held islands northeast of Hokkaido. For its part, Peking has made little secret of its discomfiture with the limited thaw in Soviet-Japanese relations and is bending its efforts to undo the progress that has been made and to block further advances.

Last month the Chinese publicly criticized the proposed Tyumen oil project. Earlier the Chinese had confined their negative statements on the project to private conversations.

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Peking apparently concluded that it would have to get tougher with Tokyo. The Chinese decided to complete plans

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quickly for a long-awaited trip to Japan, and chose Liao Cheng-chih, president of the China-Japan Friendship Association and China's highest ranking expert on Japanese affairs to head the delegation.

Liao publicly attacked the Tyumen project. He held a press conference in which he charged that oil from the Tyumen project would be used to fuel the Soviet war machine and that China would be forced to take "considerable measures" to protect itself. He said that Peking would harbor "bitter feelings" toward Japan if the project went forward.

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The Tyumen project is also objectionable to Peking because it signifies movement toward improvement in Soviet-Japanese relations, and the Chinese consider movement in this direction detrimental to their national interests. The specter of Asia's most powerful industrial nation aligned with their feared and hated neighbor cannot help but arouse Chinese fears. China has just concluded an agreement to sell one million tons of oil to Japan this year; though a drop in the bucket, this is the first time China has agreed to export crude oil.

While the Chinese are making a last-ditch effort to convince the Tanaka government to reconsider Tyumen, they must realize that there are limits to their ability to influence Japanese policy and that they risk damaging Japanese relations if their tactics are too ham-handed. The Japanese are already complaining about China's interference in their internal affairs, but Peking seems intent on pressing its case. Even if the Chinese do no more than delay the conclusion of the Tyumen deal, they will have driven home to the Japanese how strongly they oppose anything that smacks of a Soviet-Japanese rapprochement.

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Over the long pull, the Chinese are suggesting, Japan must continue to make decisions with an eye toward Washington's strategic interests or face the alternative of coming under the sway of an increasingly powerful Soviet Union. Moreover, Peking is signaling again that it sees a mutuality of interests between Peking, Tokyo, and Washington that should be fostered at every turn. Finally, the Chinese want the Japanese to know the importance Peking attaches to its rapprochement with Washington and to recognize that the new relationship with Washington represents a fundamental shift in China's strategic thinking, not just a short-run tactical maneuver.

Europe

The Chinese have continued to take an active interest in European affairs, emphasizing the now-familiar theme of vigilance against the Soviet threat. Peking has given a special place to the UK in its European diplomacy. In commenting on London's annual "Defense Estimates White Paper," for example, NCNA tacitly approved of almost all of its key judgments, a remarkable break from the past when NCNA harped on the idea that the UK defense policy would "never change its imperialist nature." NCNA approvingly quoted a white paper passage, "despite the

substantial and still increasing military strength deployed on the border with China, there has been no decrease in Soviet forces facing NATO." The article applauded the paper's judgment that "only negotiation from strength is likely to produce equitable agreements." Throughout the article there was no word of criticism, explicit or implied of the British paper.

The Chinese have expressed an interest in the purchase of British combat aircraft, French Super Frelan helicopters, and other European military equipment. The irritation such purchases would cause Moscow is certainly in the minds of the Chinese.

China virtually completed its quest for diplomatic recognition in Europe with the surprise announcement in early April of the normalization of relations with Spain; only Portugal and Ireland are still hold-outs. On the occasion of the normalization of relations with Spain, China reiterated its views that the Mediterranean should be a "sea-of-peace" that would exclude both the US and the Soviet fleets. (Madrid was responsible for reviving this concept in 1970.) As pushed by Chinese spokesmen in private, the "sea-of-peace" concept is only a thin veil for an anti-Soviet stance.

China's interests in Europe will be the focus of attention when Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei reschedules his tour of East and West Europe and North Africa. The tour was originally slated for February and March, but was postponed because Chi was attending the Paris Peace Conference. When the visits do take place--probably later this year--Chi will undoubtedly offer standard Chinese expositions about the Soviet threat in general and the dangers of MBFR and CSCE in particular.

Soviet sensitivity to Chinese "meddling" in Europe continues to show through in commentary from Moscow. Last week, for example, a lengthy article by TASS director Zamyatin sharply attacked Peking for trying to obstruct detente in Europe. Zamyatin contended that China's aim is to keep NATO as a military threat to the USSR and Eastern Europe.

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Trading Blows at ECAFE

Chinese involvement in the UN remains more of a problem for the Soviets than for the US. Peking made its debut at the UN Commission for Asia and the Far East last week and seized the opportunity to attack the USSR for "gravely menacing peace and security" in Asia. The Soviet delegate responded that the Chinese charges were the "product of a sick imagination." He threw in a Russian proverb: "he who spits into the wind may have to wipe his own face."

Sino-Soviet Trade

A Chinese trade delegation arrived in Moscow on 12 April to negotiate the annual trade agreement. Trade between the two increased from \$155 million in 1971 to \$250 million last year. The latter figure is somewhat below the pre-Cultural Revolution level and only about 10 percent of the turnover in 1959. Soviet officials have been saying they expect the level of trade this year to be about the same as in 1972.

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Soviet Spokesmen Discuss China's Military Power More Openly

The Soviet regime has in recent months been making available more information on China's strategic capabilities to at least part of the Soviet public. Speakers at foreign affairs lectures in Leningrad have provided more detail than usual about Peking's growing nuclear arsenal. The audiences are for the most part made up of the party faithful and other citizens interested in international affairs.

In late January, a public lecturer claimed that China had acquired a second-strike capability by putting missiles in silos built into rock far from the Soviet border. The speaker implied that the possibility of eliminating the Chinese missile

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threat by a "surgical" strike no longer exists. Early last month, another lecturer stated that the Chinese have 80 to 100 nuclear warheads and could deliver these to targets deep within the Soviet Union. A speaker at a public lecture last week predicted that China will probably have missiles with ranges of 5,000 to 6,000 kilometers by 1975. He spoke in terms of 45 to 50 missiles, but it is not clear whether he meant that all had this range.

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Although some lecturers have spoken of the need to keep in mind the contingency of war with China, the tone of their remarks on the Chinese nuclear capability has been matter-of-fact. There has been no apparent attempt to alarm the audience or to convey the impression that hostilities are imminent, or even likely.

The comments from Leningrad may be the first signs of a gradual effort to accustom the Soviet public to the notion that China possesses a nuclear deterrent and to place present Chinese capabilities in some perspective. An effort of this kind could also serve as an indirect answer to those who may have wondered why the USSR does not simply destroy China's nuclear capability before it is too late.

A Soviet academician who recently visited the US addressed this general subject with remarks that may reflect views widely shared in Soviet academic circles. He branded the notion of a Soviet military move against China "unthinkable even on strictly military grounds." He dismissed speculation about Soviet plans for a "surgical" strike, arguing that it is simply not possible to limit war in this way and that there would be no assurance that one could avoid being drawn into an "unending ground war."

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The Soviet stressed that it would be easy to start a war, but that it would be a "real problem" to stop it.

